



A quarterly newsletter for WDVA employees

Volume 1 Issue 3

October 2001

Veterans Day Events

November 7

WDVA employees Ben Pineda and Andrew Clark speaking to high school students at the New Market Skill Center and at the Tumwater Rotary Club Luncheon

November 7

1:30 P.M. Veterans Day Program - Seattle PSHCS Bldg 100, BB 108

November 9

1:30 P.M. Veterans Day Program - PSHCS, American Lake site Auditorium Bldg. 9

November 10

11 A.M. - Auburn Veterans Day Parade
1 P.M. Outstanding Veterans Awards Ceremony - Auburn Elks

November 11

10 A.M. - Retsil Veterans Day Program

2 P.M. - Orting Veterans Day Program

Spokane Veterans Day Program afternoon

November 12

10 A.M. - Olympia Veterans Day Parade & Ceremony

November 18

5 P.M. - St. Martins Pavilion, Lacey Veterans Appreciation Dinner

“Making a World of Difference”

State Employees were recently asked to make donations to the charity of their choice through the Combined Fund Drive (CFD). This annual state campaign is a 16-year tradition and provides state employees and public agencies an opportunity to make a difference by contributing to causes they care about. The drive officially began Sept. 15 and runs through Oct. 31; however, donation forms are accepted throughout the year, so it's never too late to sign up! The CFD office can be contacted at (360) 664-1995.

The Orting Soldiers Home and Colony – with the creativity of Pat Sams and Kathy Willis – put a new twist on encouraging employees to donate. Pat and Kathy coordinated with employees willing to contribute an item for a drawing. Employees signed up for the CFD and



Dale Cain, Jerry Quintus and Dick Venesky fill their plates at the Soup and Sandwich Charity Lunch.

could also purchase a roll of “lifesavers” to enter the drawing, which included items such as: a traveling alarm clock, gift certificates to restaurants, a trip to Mount St.

See CFD page 8

Veterans Home Business Office Tackles Turnover Problem

Since Jan. 1995, there have been fourteen different FTE's to fill two Fiscal Tech and one Cashier position, eight different accountants in the two Accountant 2 positions, and three different Chief Accountants.



(L to R front row) Valerie Chu, Espie Austria, Felice Capone, and Debby Smith-Wray. (L to R back row) Scott Whitmore, Jennifer Bush, Bob Dodge and Michael Orosz. Not pictured are Peggy Challman and Sherlita Steinberger.

But, thanks to an organizational change in the structure of Retsil's business office, the recruitment difficulties and high turnover of the previous five years now appear to be just an unpleasant memory.

“This last June marked the one year anniversary of having no turnover in the business office fiscal staff,” said Debby Griswold, Retsil's human resource consultant. “Before that, we were in a vicious cycle that just continued to get worse.”

According to Griswold, the first step in finding the solution to this disabling situation was to identify the specific problems. Griswold, along with Business Manager Espie Austria,

See Business page 7

Preparedness Counts

The past few weeks have served as a reminder to each of us that being ready for any event is what allows us to act quickly and save lives. Whether it be a terrorist attack or a natural disaster, **Preparedness Counts**. We've gone through several real life events in our local area in the past two years including Y2K and the February earthquake. WDVA and its employees have been diligent in their efforts - and the agency successfully managed each of these events. However, we must ensure that no matter what happens we are prepared.

That means we will continue paying attention to emergency preparedness now and well into the future. Emergency preparedness will no longer be targeted to a single event or day, it will be a method of operation that will help us serve veterans during times of crises. We've proven we have the capacity to ensure the safety of our residents, and now our focus will be to stay ready and stay focused.

We do have policies and procedures in place which call for specific actions in times of crises, but our focus must be on real life readiness. While we conduct periodic drills and readiness events, the key to success in this area is our ability to carry out those procedures.

There are several things we must do to ensure our Emergency Preparedness Plans are effective:

- You and your family should prepare at home for any emergency.

The success of WDVA in times of crises will depend on each of us. Should we not feel our families are safe, we will not be available to ensure the safety of residents. The shaded box contains some information from the Washington State Department of Emergency Management web site. For more indepth guidelines visit the site at www.wa.gov/wsem/3-peat/pubed/01campaign/02-prep-family.htm.

- WDVA will further develop our comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan. This plan will include everything from keeping an extra food & pharmacy supply to how to obtain clean water and keep the electricity flowing. As I said before, we've done this in the past with specific events, the goal now is to sustain our past efforts.

- PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE. While plans and policies are important to have, they're not much help if they've never been practiced and tested. Not only will we practice what we've developed, we'll learn from our drills and refine our policies and procedures as we learn what works and what doesn't.

Each of us is an important part of this effort and I encourage you to work with your supervisor and co-workers to help define your own role in the Emergency Preparedness Plan.

The purpose of this message is not to sound an alarm. In fact, the hope is that this message will help put us all at ease. The February earthquake was a reminder that anything can happen and we won't always have a warning bell. The recent terrorist attacks have also been a reality check that we don't always control our surroundings and the best we can do is be prepared.

Please feel free to contact me, your supervisor, or Oscar Green, WDVA Safety Officer should you have specific questions or concerns.

Thank you,



Preparing Your Family for Disaster

When preparing your family for disaster, plan to be on your own for at least three days. Chances are likely that after a major disaster, traditional emergency response teams will be too busy to provide immediate care to you or your family.

The Plan

Have at least a three-day supply of food, water, clothes, medical supplies and other necessary equipment for everyone in your family, including pets.

Decide where and when to reunite your family should you be apart when a disaster happens.

Choose a person outside the immediate area to contact if family members are separated. Long distance phone service will probably be restored sooner than local service. Do not use the phone immediately following a disaster.

If you have a family member who does not speak English, prepare an emergency card written in English indicating that person's identification, address and any special needs such as medication or allergies. Tell that person to keep the card with them at all times.

Conduct earthquake and fire drills once every six months.

Establish all the possible ways to exit your home. Keep all exits clear of debris.

Make sure all family members know about your disaster plan. Also, relay this information to babysitters or others who might be in your home.

Know the policies of the school and daycare your children attend. Make sure your child's emergency release card is up to date. Designate others to pick up your child should you be unable to pick them up.

Source: WA Military Dept., Emergency Management Division

Performance Council Making Progress

Quality and Strategic Planning
by Chris Touris

We are steadily progressing on our Quality & Strategic Planning journey. To aid in the process, we have established a **Performance Council**, charged with directing the implementation and completion of our strategic strategies. Its membership is comprised of management level representatives from the agency's major programs:

- Administrative Services: Human Resources Manager, Evelyn Harris
- Soldiers Home: Associate Superintendent, Vanessa Gaston
- Veterans Home: Associate Superintendent, Barbara Culley
- Veterans Services: Grants & Contracts Manager, Jim Rising

The Performance Council meets on the third Friday of each month. For information on council activities, meeting notes, and other resource materials go to Outlook in the following folder: Public Folders, DVA, Performance Council.

In May, I provided the agency managers some initial observations along with the future direction of our quality journey. One of the areas identified as a target for improvement was fully developing our objectives. In doing so, we have completed a thorough review of all agency projects/initiatives and identified actions to be completed to ensure they can drive results. The review entailed an assessment against the **SMART criteria**. As a result of that review, we will be working hard to ensure sound action plans are developed to especially include metrics/measurements for all objectives.

To aid in the development of the **action plans**, we will solicit the assistance of another team still in development, **The Performance Consultants**. This team will provide

expert advice in their areas of specialty such as skills building, statistical analysis, computer based training, metrics/measurements development, etc. If you are interested in being a part of this process or have a specialty that will aid the agency please contact the Quality & Strategic Planning Office at (360) 725-2166 or 725-2176.

The duties previously performed by the Quality Steering Committee will be encompassed in the **Council and Consultants charters**. Therefore, the Quality Steering Committee will not continue to operate. I want to thank everyone who participated on the Quality Steering Committee, as well as the Performance and the Cross-Functional Teams. Although they will not continue to operate, they have provided a great foundation to build our future direction. Employees that previously participated on these teams will still have an active role in the agency's Quality & Strategic Planning process. We will be generating **Process Action Teams (PAT)** to actually work the resolutions for identified improvement opportunities.

In the very near future, the Performance Council members will be considering improvement opportunities for the agency. We will be asking staff members to identify areas that require major improvements, and to be visionary three to five years and suggest possible DVA future endeavors. The results of these efforts, along with identified areas from the agency self-assessment will be used in updating our agency strategic plan. We will continue to work our present strategies, as well as develop new ones initiated from these processes.

We have developed a **Strategies Process** as guidance to working strategies of the agency strategic plan. It explains the identification, development, presentation, monitoring, reporting, and termination of an improvement opportunity (project, initiative, or strategy). Please note future reference to projects and initiatives will be called strategies. This is in an effort to conform to the Baldrige Criteria, which is supported by the Governor's office. The Strategy Process will involve staff at all levels of the agency. Each strategy will be managed by a Performance Council Member, an Executive Sponsor, and a Project Leader who will facilitate a PAT. The PAT will encompass employees that are intimately involved in that actual work type. These employees are closer to the issue and are the best to suggest resolutions to problems in their area. The PAT will define the project and develop the solution. I encourage all employees to get involved in the process as either a Performance Consultant, Project Manager, or/and PAT member.

The Quality & Strategic Planning staff will soon be developing on-time training for those that are actively participating in the process. We are also developing a Quality & Strategic Planning communication process to ensure information is available to all employees on the agency's progress.

Remember, if you have an idea that will improve the agency's performance, go to **Strategies** on the V-net and get it started. Hope to hear from you soon.

Chris Touris - (360) 725-2166

For additional information on items bolded and italicized, visit the Strategic Plan page on the V-NET at <http://isdev>.

What's an Agency Self Assessment?

History

Every year since 1998, the Governor's Office has asked agencies to do a self-assessment based on the Baldrige quality award criteria. The assessment is designed to help agencies annually take a look at their management activities and determine ways to make improvements.

Process

The Quality Office administered the agency self-assessment. It included three levels of employees within the agency: Management, Extended Management, and Line Staff. Administering to all staffing levels provided a baseline for strategic processes. All management and extended management employees were invited to participate. Line staff

employees were chosen randomly to include 10 percent representation.

The process consisted of two phases; administration and discussion. It was administered to and discussed with each group of employees separately. During the administration phase, the Quality & Strategic Planning Manager briefly explained the purpose, process, benefits, and defined terms associated with each category. Then, questions were entertained. Each participant was provided a self-assessment tool to complete individually – no names were associated – thereby supporting anonymity in the scoring process. All individually scored assessments were provided to the Quality & Strategic Planning Manager.

At a second meeting of each group the Quality & Strategic

Planning Manager led a discussion on the tabulated results. The purpose of the discussion was to highlight what the agency is doing well and to understand how the agency could improve. Each category and its elements' results were reviewed. Elements reflecting wide differences were discussed to share possible reasons for the differences. Discussion followed and included suggestions for improvement.

The Management team then reviewed the scores for consensus to be forwarded to the Governor's Office.

Future actions are being considered and an update will be given once they are finalized.

For more in-depth data visit the Strategic Plan page on the V-NET.

2001 Agency Self Assessment (With & Without [W/O] Line Staff Figures)

CATEGORY	W/O	With
Leadership: This category addresses the organization's leadership system and how management addresses values, organization directions, performance expectations, focus on customers and stakeholders, learning and innovation.	3.50	3.30
Strategic Planning: This category examines the organization's strategy development and deployment processes. It addresses how plans are deployed and how performance is tracked.	2.95	2.70
Customer Focus: Customer Focus examines how the organization determines requirements and expectations of customers. It also addresses how the organization builds relationships with customers and determines their satisfaction.	3.70	3.43
Information & Analysis: This category addresses the organization's performance measurement system. It also examines how the organization analyzes performance data and information.	2.85	2.53
Human Resource Focus: This category examines how the organization develops employees and how a work environment is created that supports full participation, personal and organizational growth.	2.95	2.80
Process Management: This category examines the key aspects of the organization's process management, including customer-focused design, service delivery, and supplier and partnering processes involving all work units.	2.45	2.37
Performance Results: This category examines the organization's performance and improvement over time in key business areas.	2.70	2.40

Spokane News

First Residents Enjoy Get Acquainted Barbecue

One week to the day after the flags were raised and the ribbon cut – marking the official opening of the Spokane Veterans Home – residents and staff were enjoying their first barbecue luncheon.



Staff member Keith O'Donnell, helped by flipping burgers.



Dietician Karin Gilchrist makes sure she has Mr. Kimble's order for lunch right.



Mr. and Mrs. Biegert are enjoying the tasty watermelon.



Mr. Ritchey ate his share of hamburgers and potato salad.

The “get acquainted party” boasted a mouth-watering menu, consisting of hamburgers, german sausage, macaroni and potato salads, chips, watermelon and brownies.

“Residents and their families did a great deal of laughing and sharing memories,” said administrator Kathy Magonigle. “In the future, we will have events with our barbecues,” she said, “but for the first one, it was more of a get-to-know-you type party.”

Future events are already being planned, and now that Recreation Therapist Shane Price has joined the staff, residents and other staff members are looking forward to a busy fall season.

Spokane Veterans Home Grand Opening

\$5000 for Spokane Home



Spokane Veterans Home officially opens its doors Sept. 28, 2001, with a ribbon cutting ceremony. U.S. Congressman Nethercutt (center-left) was among the many dignitaries attending the ceremony.



WDVA Director John King (right) gladly accepts a \$5000 dollar donation for the Spokane Veterans Home from John Lee, CTFA Vice President, Wealth Management Group, Union Bank of California.

Orting News

Recognition Team-Efforts Foster Camaraderie

In November of 2000, a group of employees was assigned to the Recognition

Committee at the Washington Soldiers Home. These individuals were tasked with improving the moral of approximately 200 employees and encouraging staff to recognize employees who do outstanding work. The committee developed a variety of strategies to implement the program. Immediately, a "Shining Star" drawing was held to recognize outstanding employees and five months of prizes were given away.

Over the course of the year, the Recognition Committee has put

together two recognition ceremonies. In addition, the committee helps to foster a sense of community and camaraderie by hosting "theme days".

◆ **Dynamic Duo Day** (Dress up like a famous team or combination) – was designed to promote communication and teamwork among staff.



The Limbo contest at one of the fundraisers earlier this year.

◆ **Australia Day** – held during National Nursing Home Week included an Australian Jeopardy-type trivia game for both residents and staff.

◆ **Italian Day** – featured an authentic dinner for seven people who work the night shift.

◆ **Easter Eggs** – were placed in staff work places for employees to discover during their workday.



Dynamic Duo—Kari Arthur and Beverly Frawley.



Night Shift Italian Meal.

◆ **The Sock Hop** – encouraged staff to don 50's-style dress with prizes for best dressed.

Future events include a Halloween decorating contest and holiday celebration for staff on all three shifts in December. The committee also hosts events such as drawings and two theme BBQ's throughout the year, to collect money for more staff appreciation awards.

Thanks go out to Michelle Ray (Chair), Kathleen Weibe, Lydia Ransom, Vanessa Gaston, Julie Evans, Steve Hosford, Norma Urquhart, Stephanie Santos, Nancy Egnaw, Rene Galloway – and all employees who participate in the Employee Recognition Committee events. Your efforts to better the working environment at the Washington Soldiers Home and Colony are paying off!

Quality Projects Appear in Governor's Governing for Results Book



At a brief ceremony Oct. 10, several staff were recognized for their participation in the Styrofoam to Ceramic Cup project. Previously, the agency purchased 8,942 styrofoam cups per week – now they purchase less than 500 cups a month, reducing the cost by \$5,911 per year. Mike Arthur, Commissary Mgr. originally submitted the idea to the Brainstorm Program. Pictured (L to R) are team members Shannah Rongen, Syndee Wietfeld, Martha Fox, Terry Newby, Lynn Zemke, and Mike Arthur.



Norma Urquhart and Gary Klein recently recognized for their ID card project—saving the home \$500 a year while improving the quality and service to staff members.

Retsil News

Veterans Home Seeking Solution to CNA Shortage

A shortage of health care workers has prompted the Washington State Hospital Association to seek state legislative help. Hospitals aren't the only health care providers affected, however, as nursing homes are being forced to spend 21 percent of their budget on salaries for temporary staffing agencies to provide nurses and nurse assistants.

At Newport hospital in Eastern Washington, Chief Executive Officer John White believes, "If you don't manufacture your own, it's hard to find them." That's why several years ago, the hospital began its own training program.

Starting Oct. 22, the Washington Veterans Home will be following suit, as classes begin for their first Nursing Assistant Registered Program, under the guidance of Program Director Ed Dolle.

"This educational offering prepares people interested in becoming Certified Nursing Assistants for the state exam," said Dolle. Besides providing people new to health care the opportunity to become health care providers at the CNA level, Dolle also feels the ability to quickly train their own CNA workforce will become critical as WDVA move towards building the new 240 bed nursing facility planned at Retsil.

The program, open to staff and the public, will be slightly over 140 hours, and the first class has space available for 10 students.

For additional information on applying for the Nursing Assistant Registered Program, contact Ed Dolle at (360) 895-4358 or e-mail him at edd@dva.wa.gov.

Additional Avenue to Staying Informed

**"Where did you hear that?"
"I'm always the last to know!"
"I never know what's going on!"**

Have you ever heard - or said - any of the comments above? While these phrases may be common and may never go away entirely, the Veterans Home is doing its best to ensure they don't hear them as often!

On the first Wednesday of each month, you'll find Superintendent Bob Jones and Associate Superintendent Barbara Culley enjoying lunch with staff in various areas of the home.

A meeting with no agenda? You heard right! The **Brown Bag Sessions** are completely free from agendas, minutes and talking points.

The most common topics for discussion include; the agency Master Plan, staffing issues, and the future of the Veterans Home.

This program is also helping to highlight that agency communication is a two-way process. In order to be part of the communication process, each of us needs to ask questions, listen and actively participate.

If you have any questions about the **Brown Bag Sessions**, call (360) 895-4709.

Business from page 1

former Superintendent Alfie Alvarado and former Assistant Director Donna Grazzini, came up with a list of what they considered the four major problems:

- High Turnover.
- Recruitment Difficulties.
- Increased Workload Demands.
- Limited Opportunities for Advancement.

After receiving input from staff, they further broke down what the causes for the problems appeared to be:

- Entry Level/High Demand positions allowed the agency to serve as a training ground for other employers, resulting in high turnover.
- Retsil's location and low



Regina Kilby and Sue Perrault, commissary staff.

salaries resulted in difficulty recruiting and delayed hiring.

- The high turnover and delayed hiring resulted in increased workloads.
- Increased workloads, low salaries and limited promotion opportunities resulted in decreased staff morale.

- Decreased staff morale resulted in high turnover.

"We had a vicious cycle that just kept continuing," said Griswold.

In order to break the cycle, the team came up with a plan that allowed positions to be designated as in-training to the next level in the accounting series. For example, a Fiscal Technician became an in-training to Accountant 1 and an Accountant 1 became an in-training up in the job series of up to an Accountant 4.

According to Griswold, the monetary cost to implement these changes was less than \$1,400 per month, but the advantages were monumental, not just in the increased staff opportunities, but the enhanced staff morale.



WDVA Recognized for Employees' Ideas

WDVA was honored recently at the Productivity Board's annual recognition of Brainstorm and Teamwork Incentive Programs.

State agencies were thanked by Governor Gary Locke and Secretary of State Sam Reed for participating in saving the state money, generating income and improving service within state government.

WDVA's Deputy Director John Lee, and Brainstorm Coordinator Barb Logan, were present to accept the honor of **Agency with the Highest Implementation Rate for 2000**. WDVA produced a 67 percent implementation rate of brainstorm ideas for the year.

Any employee, or group of employees, can submit a brainstorm or teamwork incentive idea for consideration. Contact Barb Logan at barb@dva.wa.gov for additional information.

Upcoming Events

Veterans Day Activities

(see front page)



November 22

Residents & Families
Thanksgiving Dinner
11:30 - Retsil

December 4 - 6

American Legion
Gift Shop for residents
Retsil Auditorium

December 7 & 8

Holiday Bazaar
Orting Chilson Hall
(Open to the public)

December 8

Staff Holiday Party
Orting Eagles Hall

December 9

Elks Dinner Party
5:30 Retsil Auditorium

December 14

Central Office
Holiday Potluck

December 20

Orting Resident's
Holiday Party
2:30 Nursing care
6:30 Chilson Hall

December 21

Retsil Resident's
Holiday Party
6:30 Auditorium

December 31

New Years Eve
Dance
Orting Residents
Chilson Hall



2002 Open Enrollment Moves Online

Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) open enrollment runs Oct. 22 - Nov. 30, and the 2002 PEBB open enrollment will be more interactive than ever before. In addition to changing health plans online and locating a doctor, this year state employees will actually be able to evaluate the plans available to them, based on the criteria they select. This new feature is called *Compare-a-Plan*. The online option, known as *e-coverage*, will be back again, offering the ability to waive coverage or reinstate coverage that was previously waived.

After October 22, try out the new interactive enrollment features at www.wa.gov/hca/pebb.htm. Steps have been taken to ensure that only the Health Care Authority, and medical and/or dental plans have access to enrollee information submitted through *e-coverage*.

Changes to PEBB Coverage

Every year, changes occur in benefits, cost, and plan availability. Information will be available when open enrollment materials are mailed out in October. Be sure to review this material thoroughly. If your medical plan is no longer available where you live, you will need to select a different plan. Otherwise you will automatically be enrolled in the Uniform Medical Plan.

CFD from page 1

Helen's or the Rosario Resort for Sunday Brunch in a single-engine plane, a serving platter, and a horseback riding lesson. Congratulations to all those who participated in the **Orting "Lifesavers" Drawing!**

Central office employees kicked off the CFD by holding a **Charity Lunch**. Employees were asked to donate food items to be used in the lunch. On Oct. 10, central office staff were invited to purchase a lunch for \$5. Proceeds were sent to the Mary Bridge Children's Hospital, one of the many CFD charities.